

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

The following listing of claims replaces all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the captioned patent application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Currently Amended) An at least partially implantable hearing system comprising:
 - at least one electromechanical output transducer;
 - a micromanipulator for rotationally and axially positioning the said transducer, said micromanipulator constructed and arranged for fixing the said transducer in a position set by the said micromanipulator after micromanipulator is fixedly attached to a cranial vault; and
 - a releasable coupling unit disposed between the said transducer and the said micromanipulator,
 - said coupling unit, in an assembled state, fixing the said transducer with respect to the said micromanipulator, and, in a released state, permitting removal of the said transducer from the said micromanipulator, and
 - wherein said releasable coupling unit is a snap-in coupling and that enables replacement of the said transducer while maintaining said position set by the said micromanipulator prior to removal without readjustment of the said micromanipulator.
2. (Currently Amended) The system ~~as claimed in~~ of claim 1, wherein the releasable coupling comprises:
 - a transducer-side coupling element, and
 - a micromanipulator-side coupling element,
 - said coupling elements constructed and arranged ~~being adapted~~ to be selectively mechanically engaged with each other and disengaged from each other, respectively.
3. (Currently Amended) The system ~~as claimed in~~ of claim 2, wherein ~~the said~~ transducer-side coupling element is constructed and arranged to be designed for being fixedly connected to the said transducer already during production of the said transducer.

4. (Currently Amended) The system ~~as claimed in~~ of claim 2, wherein ~~the~~ said transducer-side coupling element is constructed and arranged to be ~~designed for being~~ fixedly connected to ~~the~~ said transducer in the course of an implantation of ~~the~~ said transducer.

5. (Currently Amended) The system ~~as claimed in~~ of claim 2, wherein ~~the~~ said micromanipulator-side coupling element defines means for receiving ~~the~~ said transducer-side coupling element.

6. (Currently Amended) The system ~~as claimed in~~ of claim 2, wherein at least one of ~~the~~ said coupling elements is at least partially made of elastic material.

7. (Currently Amended) The system ~~as claimed in~~ of claim 6, wherein the elastic material is a soft polymeric material.

8. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 2, wherein both coupling elements are made of non-elastic material.

9. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 8, wherein the non-elastic material is selected from the group consisting of hard polymeric materials, biocompatible metals and ceramic materials.

10. (Canceled).

11. (Currently Amended) The system ~~as claimed in~~ of claim 2, wherein ~~the~~ said micromanipulator-side coupling element defines a rigid annular receiver member, and wherein ~~the~~

said transducer-side coupling element is at least partially elastic and adapted to snap into ~~the~~ said rigid annular receiver member in a substantially axial direction.

12. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the micromanipulator-side coupling element comprises an expandable fork, and wherein the transducer-side coupling element is adapted to be snapped into the fork in a substantially radial direction.

13. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the micromanipulator-side coupling element comprises an expandable receiver member, and wherein the transducer-side coupling element is adapted to be inserted into the receiver member in a substantially axial direction and to be locked in a position in which the transducer-side coupling element is detained.

14. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 2, wherein the micromanipulator-side coupling element comprises a pair of expandable tongs, and wherein the transducer-side coupling element is adapted to be introduced between the tongs in a substantially axial direction.

15. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 14, comprising locking means for locking the expandable tongs in a closed position in which the transducer-side coupling element is detained.

16. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 15, wherein the locking means comprise a sleeve which is mounted for sliding movement along a portion of the tongs.

17. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 1, wherein the releasable coupling unit comprises a plug-type coupling including a pair of coupling elements one of which is adapted to be inserted into the other one, said coupling elements, in the assembled state of the coupling, being held engaged with each other by an interference fit.

18. (Withdrawn) The system as claimed in claim 17, wherein said one coupling element includes a dovetailed portion and said other coupling element includes a complementary receiving groove adapted to receive the dovetailed portion.

19. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 2, wherein at least one of the said two coupling elements is rotationally symmetrical.

20. (Withdrawn) The system of claim 2, wherein the micromanipulator-side coupling element is axially symmetrical with respect to an axis of the transducer.

21. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein ~~the~~ said electromechanical output transducer is selected from the group consisting of electromagnetic, electrodynamic, magnetostrictive, dielectric and piezoelectric transducers and of combinations of such transducers.

22. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein said coupling unit, in the released state, permitting removal of ~~the~~ said transducer from ~~the~~ said micromanipulator while maintaining the set position.

23. (New) An at least partially implantable hearing system comprising:

- at least one means for electromechanical stimulation;
- a positioning means for rotationally and axially positioning said stimulation means,
- said positioning means having means for fixing said stimulation means in a position set by said positioning means after positioning means is fixedly attached to a cranial vault;
- and

- a releasable coupling means disposed between the stimulation means and the positioning means,

- said coupling means, in an assembled state, fixing said stimulation means with respect to said positioning means, and, in a released state, permitting removal of said stimulation means from said positioning means, and

- wherein said releasable coupling means is a snap-in coupling means that enables replacement of said stimulation means while maintaining said position set by said positioning means prior to removal without readjustment of said positioning means.

24. (New) The system of claim 23, wherein the releasable coupling means comprises:

- a stimulation-side coupling element, and
- a positioning-side coupling element,
- said coupling elements having means for being selectively mechanically engaged with each other and disengaged from each other, respectively.

25. (New) The system of claim 24, wherein the stimulation-side coupling element having means for being fixedly connected to said stimulation means already during production of said stimulation means.

26. (New) The system of claim 24, wherein said stimulation-side coupling element having means for being fixedly connected to said stimulation means in the course of an implantation of said stimulation means.

27. (New) The system of claim 24, wherein said positioning-side coupling element having means for receiving said transducer-side coupling element.

28. (New) The system of claim 24, wherein at least one of said coupling elements is at least partially made of elastic material.

29. (New) The system of claim 28, wherein the elastic material is a soft polymeric material.

30. (New) The system of claim 24, wherein

said positioning-side coupling element defines a rigid annular receiver member, and wherein

said stimulation-side coupling element is at least partially elastic and having means for snapping into said rigid annular receiver member in a substantially axial direction.

31. (New) The system of claim 24, wherein at least one of said two coupling elements is rotationally symmetrical.

32. (New) The system of claim 23, wherein said electromechanical stimulation means is selected from the group consisting of electromagnetic, electrodynamic, magnetostrictive, dielectric and piezoelectric transducers and of combinations of such transducers.

33. (New) The system of claim 23, wherein said coupling means, in the released state, having means for permitting removal of said stimulation means from said positioning means while maintaining the set position.

34. (New) A method of implanting an at least partially implantable hearing system comprising:

- providing at least one electromechanical transducer in a recipient;
- providing a micromanipulator in a recipient;
 - said micromanipulator for rotationally and axially positioning said transducer,
- coupling said transducer to said micromanipulator through a releasable coupling unit disposed between said transducer and said micromanipulator;
 - said coupling unit, in an assembled state, fixing said transducer with respect to said micromanipulator, and, in a released state, permitting removal of said transducer from said micromanipulator, and
 - wherein said releasable coupling unit is a snap-in coupling that enables replacement of said transducer while maintaining said position set by said micromanipulator prior to removal without readjustment of said micromanipulator;
- positioning said transducer in a position set by said micromanipulator.

35. (New) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

- providing said releasable coupling element comprising:
 - a transducer-side coupling element,
 - a micromanipulator-side coupling element,
 - said coupling elements constructed and arranged to be selectively mechanically engaged with each other and disengaged from each other, respectively.

36. (New) The method of claim 35, further comprising fixedly connecting said transducer-side coupling element to said transducer during production of said transducer.

37. (New) The method of claim 35, further comprising fixedly connecting said transducer-side coupling element to said transducer in the course of an implantation of said transducer.

38. (New) The method of claim 35, further comprising:

- coupling said transducer-side coupling element with said micromanipulator-side coupling element defining a rigid annular receiver member.

39. (New) The method of claim 34, further comprising detaching said transducer from said micromanipulator when said coupling unit is in a released state.